

SITE OF COFFIN'S MILL

Coffin's Mill was the second mill to be built in the Town of Leeds (the first being in West Leeds). The mill was originally erected on land owned by Thomas Mitchell who arrived from Bath in 1802. Before moving, he had purchased the land and water rights having been urged to do so by his brother, Joseph, who owned a farm further up Quaker Ridge. Uncertain as to whether the stream had enough water to run a mill, Thomas offered the use of the water for ten years to Peter and Elias Lane if they could construct a dam and a mill. They did and when it became successful Thomas bought out their interest.

Following a fire and rebuilding, the mill was run successfully until 1812. During the War of 1812, President Jefferson caused an embargo to be placed upon shipping from U.S. Ports. This was to prevent the British from "impressing" American seamen aboard our ships and conscripting them to the British Navy on the premise that they were really escaped British subjects rather than American citizens.

While the embargo may have saved the sailors, it proved disastrous to Maine's lumber trade and for Thomas Mitchell, whose plan it was to transport his lumber to ports aboard schooners.* Mitchell was forced to sell his mill and most of his land while the mill was idle, he built a new house "near the mill" (possibly opposite the Coffin Farm as a grandson, a Mitchell, is shown to be living "on the old homestead" opposite the Coffin Farm on the 1858 map. A foundation located between that site and the dam site is marked W Turner on that map. Both foundation holes have since been destroyed during subsequent forest harvesting.)

At some point Nathan Coffin (born in Greene 1818) purchased the rebuilt mill which, I believe, sawed both lumber and shingles. Coffin's long association with the mill has resulted in the site retaining his name. Nathan lived, and most likely built, the Coffin Farm at the top of the knoll on the south side of the road.

*Hallowell (app. 21 miles from here) was the nearest port for ocean going vessels and was thus a far more important commercial center than Lewiston at that time.

Stinchfield, History of the Town of Leeds, first published 1901.
Suburban News (? heading of article from larger paper), 1893
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